

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
NEWS ANALYSIS 1-0892
CHARLES MEDD

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THE PARTIES IN 1976 -- TRYING TO WIN THE HARD WAY

ANNCR:

THE ELECTION YEAR IS NOW FIVE MONTHS OLD, AND IT'S STILL ANYBODY'S GUESS JUST WHO THE REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS WILL CHOOSE AS THEIR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES. (OPT) NEXT TUESDAY'S PRIMARY ELECTIONS IN THE BIG STATES OF CALIFORNIA, NEW JERSEY AND OHIO MAY CLARIFY MATTERS, BUT IT'S NOW PROBABLE THAT NOTHING WILL BE CERTAIN UNTIL THE PARTIES HOLD THEIR NOMINATING CONVENTIONS IN JULY AND AUGUST. (END OPT) CHARLES MEDD DISCUSSES THE PARTIES AND THEIR PROBLEMS.

VOICE:

THE REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS ARE AGAIN STRUGGLING AMONG THEMSELVES FOR PARTY LEADERSHIP, AND THIS YEAR, MORE THAN MOST, IT'S HARD TO FIND MUCH LOGIC IN THE PROCEEDINGS. THE MINORITY REPUBLICANS ENTERED THE CONTEST WITH THE BEST CAMPAIGN ASSET OF ALL, THE PRESIDENCY ITSELF. WHETHER OR NOT RONALD REAGN AND HIS SUPPORTERS CAN TAKE AWAY THAT ASSET, HIS CONSERVATIVE CHALLENGE TO PRESIDENT FORD HAS SHIFTED MUCH OF THE PARTY DEBATE TO THE RIGHT OF THE VITAL POLITICAL CENTER WHERE MOST NATIONAL ELECTIONS ARE WON OR LOST.

MEANWHILE, THE DEMOCRATS SEEM UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO GIVE UP THEIR PENCHANT FOR SELF-INFLECTED WOUNDS. AS SOON AS THE EARLY PRIMARIES PRODUCED A CLEAR FRONT-RUNNER IN JIMMY CARTER -- WHO THE POLLS SUGGEST COULD WIN IN NOVEMBER -- MOST PARTY LEADERS BEGAN LOOKING FOR AN ALTERNATIVE. FOR THE MOMENT, THEIR GUIDING SLOGAN SEEMS TO BE "ANYBODY BUT CARTER,"

EVEN IF THE DEMOCRATS CAN'T AGREE ON WHO THE "ANYBODY" SHOULD BE.

ALL THIS MAY BE CONFUSING TO THOSE IN OTHER COUNTRIES ACCUSTOMED TO POLITICAL PARTIES THAT ARE BOUND TOGETHER BY IDEOLOGY AND DISCIPLINE. THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES ARE BEST DEFINED AS INFORMAL GATHERINGS OF INTEREST GROUPS, BROAD ENOUGH FOR AMERICANS OF VARYING, EVEN CONFLICTING, POINTS OF VIEW. IT'S TRUE THAT ORGANIZED LABOR FEELS MORE AT HOME WITH THE DEMOCRATS, THAT ORGANIZED BUSINESS IS MORE COMPATIBLE WITH THE REPUBLICANS, BUT THE COMMITMENT OF BOTH GROUPS IS NEVER TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

TO WIN, THE PARTIES TRADITIONALLY TRY TO OFFER SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY, AND IN THEIR SEARCH FOR A CANDIDATE THEY LOOK FOR SOMEONE WITH BROADEST POSSIBLE APPEAL. MOST OF THIS YEAR'S ELECTION SURVEYS SHOW THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE FAR LESS CONCERNED ABOUT POLICY ISSUES THAN PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER. AND THUS FAR, NEITHER THE VOTERS, NOR THE PARTIES, ARE CERTAIN WHO AMONG THE VARIOUS CANDIDATES HAS THE MOST DESIRED QUALITIES.

SO THE STRUGGLE GOES ON, DEMOCRATS AGAINST DEMOCRATS, REPUBLICANS AGAINST REPUBLICANS. THE NOMINATING CONVENTIONS WILL CHANGE ALL THAT.

THERE EACH PARTY WILL FINALLY COME UP WITH A CANDIDATE AND QUICKLY GO ABOUT PATCHING UP ALL THOSE INTERNAL WOUNDS. IF A BIT BATTERED, THEY WILL THEN TRY TO PRESENT THEMSELVES AS THE PARTY WITH THE BEST ANSWERS FOR THE MOST PEOPLE.

EC/CAK